

A guide to supporting older ex-service men and women in Scotland



Who we are

Age Scotland is the national charity for older people. We work to improve the lives of everyone over the age of 50 so that they can love later life.

Our vision is a Scotland where everyone can love later life.

Our mission is to inspire, involve and empower older people in Scotland, and influence others, so that people can make the most of later life.

Our three strategic aims are to:

 **Help older people to be as well as they can be**

 **Promote a positive view of ageing and later life**

 **Tackle loneliness and isolation**

How we can help

We know that growing older doesn’t come with a manual. Later life can bring changes and opportunities to your life and you may need to know about rights, organisations and services which are unfamiliar to you.

That’s why we provide free information and advice to help you on a range of topics including benefits and entitlements, social care, legal issues such as Power of Attorney, housing and much more. All of our guides are available to download for free from our website, or you can contact our helpline team to have copies posted to you for free.

The Age Scotland **helpline** is a free, confidential phone service for older people, their carers and families in Scotland looking for information and advice.

Later life can bring times when you just need someone to talk to. Our **friendship line** is part of our wider helpline and older people can call us for a chat. We’re here to listen, provide friendship and offer support.

For information, advice and friendship



Call us free on:
0800 12 44 222
(Mon – Fri, 9am - 5pm)



Visit agescotland.org.uk
to find out more.

Who is this guide for?

Paid staff and volunteers that work with and support older people in Scotland. It is designed to:

- help you identify someone who has served in the British Armed Forces,
- improve understanding of military life and culture,
- equip you with knowledge and confidence to support older ex-service men and women.

Ready reference

This reference highlights key points and where you will find more information about them.

Key points	Explained	Details and resources
Ex-service men and women, and their dependants, are common in the older population	About the Armed Forces community in Scotland - p 2	Statistics and trends for the ex-service community in Scotland - p 13
Military service can impact on someone in later life	The military experience and armed forces culture - p 3	British Armed Forces timeline - p 14 Statistics and trends for the ex-service community in Scotland - p 13
Not every ex-service man or woman sees themselves as a veteran	About the Armed Forces community in Scotland - p 2	Useful questions to ask about military service - p 15 The British Armed Forces in outline - p 15 Who is recognised as a veteran in the United Kingdom - p 18
Reconnection with the armed-forces community may benefit an older ex-service man or woman who has lost contact	Comradeship and peer support - p 6	Older veterans social directory for Scotland (available free from Age Scotland) Scotland’s Regiments - p 16
Extra support and opportunities are available to older ex-service men and women	Entitlements and support for older veterans - p 8	Unforgotten Forces directory (available free from Age Scotland) Veterans Guide to Later life (available free from Age Scotland)
By finding out about military life you can shape your activities or services to better meet the needs of older ex-service men and women	Developing support and activities for older veterans - p 10	Medals and military awards - p 17 Badges of rank - p 17 Military jargon - p 19 The British Armed Forces in outline - p 15
Partnerships and resources are available to support you with ex-service men and women	Developing support and activities for older veterans - p 10	Unforgotten Forces directory (complementary publication) Useful organisations - p 20

About the Armed Forces community in Scotland

Who belongs in the Armed Forces Community?

The Armed Forces community includes current and former servicemen and women, and their dependant spouses, civil partners, and children. Around one in twenty adults in Scotland has served in the British military, and the Armed Forces community represents one in ten of the population. Adults in that community are, on average, older than adults generally: a result of the British military being larger in the past. This is changing, but older people will remain prevalent within the Armed Forces community for some time.

Who is a veteran?

The Scottish and Westminster governments refer to ex-service men and women as ‘veterans’. Veterans may be Regulars or Reservists. Regulars are full-time members of the Armed Forces who usually live and work on military bases. Reservists are part time members of the Armed Forces: they are expected to do a few weeks of training each year and can be called on to do the same duties as Regulars. An example of Reservists is the ‘Territorial Army’, although that term is no longer used. Seafarers involved in UK commercial shipping are part of the Merchant Navy. Where they are asked and agree to support a British military operation, they also become Armed Forces veterans.

Someone is considered a veteran if they served and received pay for a minimum of one day in the British Armed Forces, and some veterans will have left the Armed Forces after a very short period due to illness or injury. The public sector, and many private and charitable organisations, apply the same definition of a veteran.

Some ex-service men and women consider themselves veterans. Some do not, and as a result can miss out on extra entitlements and the support available to them. The latter is more likely among National Servicemen, those who served only for a short time, were not deployed, or served in non-frontline roles. Men born between 1927 and 1942 are likely to have done National Service, which was compulsory for most of them between the late 1940s and early 1960s. Most did National Service in the Armed Forces and are considered veterans. Those who worked as ‘Bevan Boys’ in the coal mines are not veterans.

Veterans live across Scotland, with higher concentrations in cities and areas that host, or that have recently hosted, a military base. Examples of the latter include Moray, Fife, and the Lennox area west of Glasgow. Data about the number, ages, and locations of veterans in Scotland is partial and fragmented. However, Scotland’s Census 2022 will for the first time ask about military service and its findings should give a more complete picture.

Occasionally someone will say they are a veteran when they are not or be a veteran but exaggerate their achievements. The veterans’ community is alert to this and when someone posing as a veteran is exposed as an imposter it can result in upset and even hostility.

The military experience and armed forces culture

Military life

Being in the Armed Forces can change a person and affect the course of their life after service. Military life is structured; everyone knows their place and their role. While military jobs can be challenging and at times dangerous, serving personnel have many of their basic needs readily met by the Armed Forces. For example, they and their families are entitled to high quality subsidised accommodation both in UK and overseas.

This changes when someone leaves or is discharged from the Armed Forces. Those who go into the military straight after school may find themselves, in their mid-twenties or older, experiencing form-filling, appointments making and having to join waiting lists to use public services for the first time after leaving. While most veterans make the transition to civilian life successfully, if not easily, a minority struggle. The Armed Forces today takes steps to ease that transition; however, many older veterans received little or no support. When someone leaves the Armed Forces, this can also have a big impact on their dependant family members; for instance, they may have been living in Service Family Accommodation and need to find a new home.



Older veterans don’t like oodles of form filling. Make it simple for us. If it’s too much hassle, we’ll say ‘don’t bother’.”

George, Royal Navy veteran

Military values

Serving personnel are expected to behave according to military values. The British Army for example requires soldiers to have courage, discipline, respect for others, integrity, loyalty, and selfless commitment. Service leavers may discover that wider society doesn’t always apply these values. Their time in the Armed Forces may also set them apart, as few civilians will have had comparable experiences. No matter how short someone’s service was, while in the Armed Forces they forfeited some civilian freedoms and permitted their health and life to be put at risk.

The Armed Forces cultivate pride and strength. These attributes are valuable in the military, and often serve veterans well in civilian life. However, because of them some veterans with problems find it difficult to admit vulnerability and seek timely professional help, particularly from civilian services that may not understand military culture.



It never leaves you. Once you’ve been in the Forces, you are used to rules, and doing what you are told. That follows you through life.”

Grace, Women’s Royal Naval Service veteran

Differences among veterans

Not all veterans are alike. National Servicemen may not stand out as markedly different from other men of their generation; some were deployed in conflicts such as the Korean war, but others completed their service with little incident. Studies have found that veterans with long service tend to fare better in civilian life, whereas early service leavers are more likely to experience challenges. Some veterans enlisted to escape a difficult background. For many of these, military life was positive. Yet sometimes military team dynamics might allow a person to manage or hide past issues, only for them to arise again after separation from the close-knit Armed Forces community. And sometimes unresolved childhood traumas will be made worse by someone's service experiences.

Many veterans look back very favourably on their time in service. Some do not, however, and may not respond well to adverts for services and opportunities that use stereotypical images of proud, medal-wearing veterans.



If I had my time over, I would certainly join up again!"

Grace, Women's Royal Naval Service veteran

Diversity in the Armed Forces Community

Women have been a formal part of the Armed Forces for more than 100 years. Older ex-service women may have served in the Women's Royal Naval Service, the Women's Royal Army Corps, or the Women's Royal Air Force. While these were absorbed into their respective branches of the Armed Forces in the 1990s, their service associations continue to support veterans. Other women were in services such as the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps, which exists today with both male and female nurses.

Women were conscripted during World War 2. Many contributed to the wider war effort rather than serving in the Armed Forces and are not viewed as veterans by the Westminster and Scottish Governments. However, women who were in the Women's Land Army and Women's Timber Corps up to 1950 can apply to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for a badge in recognition of their service.

Most veterans in Scotland are white and male, but diversity in the veterans' population is increasing as the Armed Forces have been getting smaller, and new opportunities have opened within them for women. As of 2019 women can apply for every Armed Forces role available to men. Overall, the veterans community is more gender balanced, as it includes veterans' spouses and partners, widows, and widowers. Many Armed Forces charities and services will support family members as well as veterans.



When it comes to Forces banter, women are treated the same as men, but I've also found that male veterans are respectful of me."

Grace, Women's Royal Naval Service veteran

In Scotland there are veterans who served with other Armed Forces. Some Armed Forces charities will only support veterans who served in the British Armed Forces. However, the **Royal Commonwealth Ex-Service League** can support Commonwealth veterans who served alongside British Armed Forces: **www.commonwealthveterans.org.uk**. Many veterans' community groups will also welcome veterans who have served with the Armed Forces of other countries and subsequently settled in Scotland.

Until 2000 it was illegal for gay men and lesbian women to serve in the British military. About 200 to 250 were thrown out each year because of their sexuality, and frequently had their service medals removed. In 2021 the UK Government announced that British military personnel who were dismissed on grounds of homosexuality will be able to have their service medals restored if they had been taken away when they were kicked out of the armed forces. LGBT veterans who are affected by the gay ban can access support from **Fighting With Pride: www.fightingwithpride.org.uk**.

Veterans' physical health

Military service can subsequently affect someone's health, but the picture is complex. As many veterans are older, veterans as a group are more likely to experience challenges associated with later life. These include loneliness and social isolation, bereavement, declining health, and disability.

Because hard physical tasks are integral to military life, musculoskeletal disorders and injuries affecting the back, joints and limbs are the most common reasons for medical discharge in all branches of the Armed Forces. Mobility problems are common amongst veterans: mostly because so many of them are older, but in some instances service-related injuries are a factor. Relatively few veterans have multiple and complex injuries.

Veterans are significantly more likely to have hearing difficulties due to exposure to noise during service. Today the Armed Forces takes steps to protect hearing, although in combat situations this can be a challenge. Many older veterans served at a time when hearing protection was a lower priority.

Veterans' mental health

There is no evidence that, overall, mental health is worse in the veterans' community, compared to society in general.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), an anxiety disorder that may arise following a dangerous and intensely stressful experience, is only slightly more common among veterans, although if related to service experiences it can be complex to treat. The media and entertainment industries often spotlight combat-related PTSD, which unhelpfully skews public perceptions of veterans.

Today the British Armed Forces are aware of the importance of support for good mental health and are alert and able to respond where there's a risk of PTSD. This is comparatively recent however and older veterans who had traumatic experiences may have received little or no support. Stigma and shame may also delay or prevent a veteran seeking help with mental health difficulties.

Lifestyle and wellbeing

That there is a drinking culture in the Armed Forces has been well documented: alcohol has been used for coping, bonding and as reward for success. The daily rum ration in the Royal Navy only stopped in 1970.

There have been moves to address Forces drinking culture, but even if successful the legacy is likely to persist, with research showing that dangerous drinking habits often follow service personnel into civilian life. Smoking incidence among veterans is also higher: some older veterans will have been given cigarettes as part of their daily ration. Most service personnel will also have had access to cheaper duty-free alcohol and cigarettes over extended periods of their service.

Comradeship and peer support

Service men and women work closely as a team and are encouraged to have each other's back. Consequently, military life can forge strong bonds of friendship beyond what is typical in the civilian world.



I've got friends now, 40 years after I left, that I knew back then. There's a big difference in friendship in the Forces compared to civvy street. That's the one thing I would remember from the whole experience."

Graham, RAF veteran

Leaving service can mean leaving those friendships behind. However, where veterans are enabled to come together socially on a regular basis, camaraderie can be rekindled, and wellbeing boosted. While some veterans will maintain connections with the veterans' community after service, others will not, including some who deliberately sever all links. Later life can however contract a person's social circle and makes it more likely that they will experience loss. So even where a veteran has deliberately disconnected from the veterans' community, an opportunity when older 'to re-join the tribe' can be appealing and beneficial.



It's like a big a family, anyone who needs help, we'll always be there for each other."

Grace, Women's Royal Naval Service veteran

Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast clubs

From a few veterans getting together for a brew, a butty, and some banter, Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs have in less than a decade become an international phenomenon. Breakfast clubs are local, regular (some monthly, some more frequently), informal, and intergenerational, with many welcoming veterans' family members too. Typically, they are organised and promoted by veterans themselves, primarily using social media, with breakfasts hosted by a supportive local venue providing discounted or free food and beverages.



Your military service life conditions you to become a service person, and in civilian life it can be lonely if you don't have people around you who shared and understand those experiences".

Dereck Hardman, veteran and Founder of the Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Club movement



You need to be able to handle the banter, which takes all back to their service days."

Paul, army veteran and Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Club organiser

To find your nearest Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast club visit www.afvbc.net/find-a-club

Alternatively call the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** and we'll research it for you.

If you are a member of the Armed Forces community and are interested in setting up an Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Club locally, email Dereck Hardman at founder@afvbc.net.

Other comradeship opportunities for older veterans

Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs are not the only providers of regular comradeship opportunities for veterans. Some charities offer them to their members, for example Sight Scotland Veterans for visually impaired ex-service men and women, and BLESMA for veterans with limb-loss. Mental health charities including Combat Stress, and NHS services including Veterans First Point, have found that informal and welcoming peer support opportunities for veterans can aid positive mental health.

Social opportunities for Older Veterans in Scotland

This free guide includes listings for current social opportunities for veterans across the country. It can be requested from the **Age Scotland helpline** **0800 12 44 222** and is available online at age.scot/veterans.



Remembrance

Remembrance of those that have paid the ultimate sacrifice in service to the nation is important to many veterans. **Legion Scotland** is the custodian of remembrance in Scotland and facilitates veterans' participation in remembrance events. To find out more visit www.legionscotland.org.uk or follow them on social media **@LegionScotland**.

The key dates for Remembrance are Armistice Day on 11th of November and Remembrance Sunday on second Sunday in November each year, which remember service men and women who have died on active service since the beginning of the First World War. Remembrance services take place at local war memorials in most cities and towns across the UK.

Other national remembrance events include Holocaust Memorial Day (27th January), and from the ending of second world war in 1945 anniversaries of Victory in Europe (8th May) and Victory over Japan (15th August). Amongst some veterans Armed Forces Day, the last Saturday each June, can be at time to meet at their local Armed Forces memorial.

There are also many anniversaries celebrated by the specific Armed Service, for example to commemorate battles, or dates important to different regiments, fleets, and squadrons. It's useful to know the military background of the veterans you support to help you identify dates that may be important to them.

The **National Memorial Arboretum** in Staffordshire is the UK's largest year-round centre for remembrance. Visit www.thenma.org.uk.

Entitlements and support for older veterans

The Armed Forces Covenant

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation that those who serve or who have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly and not disadvantaged in civilian life. An example is where an older person has gaps in their National Insurance contributions record because they accompanied their husband, wife, or civil partner on overseas military postings. They may be able to claim Class 3 National Insurance credits that could increase their State Pension entitlement.

The Covenant says that special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved. For example, the Ministry of Defence has compensation schemes for service-related injuries and health conditions, both physical and mental. Another example is the policy of priority NHS treatment for veterans’ health conditions associated with their military service. Where this applies the veteran should be seen more quickly than someone on the same waiting list, who has the same level of clinical need.

It is helpful if veterans tell their GP, and other healthcare professionals where relevant, that they have served in the Armed Forces, although there is no obligation to do so.

The Armed Force Covenant is not a legal document (although the UK Government plans to introduce legislation in the early 2020s to put it on a legal footing). Rather the Covenant shapes government and public sector policy and practice. In 2018 the UKs nations agreed a joint ten-year Strategy for our Veterans. You can read the strategy, and about how it is being applied in Scotland, online at www.gov.scot/policies/veterans-and-armed-forces.

A Scottish Veterans Commissioner has been appointed to get to know the veterans community in Scotland, develop understanding of their experiences and needs, and advocate for change on their behalf. Visit <https://scottishveteranscommissioner.org> for more information.

Each local Council, NHS Board and various other statutory bodies in Scotland have a nominated Armed Forces and Veterans’ Champion. These are officials or elected members who have volunteered to support veterans in their area who may have problems. Contact details for Champions are available online at www.veterans-assist.org/veteran-support/veterans-champion.

Many private and third sector organisations have also signed the Armed Forces Covenant and pledged themselves to improving support and (or) opportunities for service personnel and veterans.



Discover the Covenant

You can find out more about the Armed Forces Covenant online. By signing the Covenant your organisation can send a strong signal that it is veteran friendly.

www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk

Organisations offering tailored support for older veterans

Some charities offer specialist services to veterans. The **Veterans Assist** website provides listings of veterans’ services in Scotland www.veterans-assist.org.

Many of these are part of **Unforgotten Forces**, a consortium dedicated to improving support for older veterans in Scotland. You can find out about Unforgotten Forces online at www.unforgottenforces.scot.

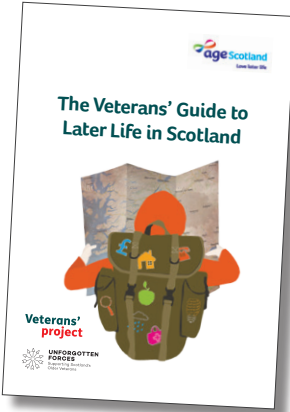
Service men and women are encouraged to give regularly and generously to their service or regimental association. These associations in turn can provide support, including financial assistance, to veterans in need.

Within the public sector there are some dedicated veterans’ services. Veterans First Point, for example, offers veterans and their families holistic support in several NHS board areas.

Advice guides for older veterans

Age Scotland publishes a **Veterans’ Guide to Later Life** which explains older veterans rights and entitlements on key later life topics including money, housing, health, and care, and includes information about specialist veterans services. It also publishes a suite of single topic guides for older veterans, including housing, sensory loss, and health and wellbeing. These guides are available online at age.scot/veterans, and postal copies can be ordered from the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** or by emailing publications@agescotland.org.uk.

Age Scotland can provide community groups and services with multiple copies, so you could take a reference copy for yourself and give others to older veterans and their dependants.



Developing support and activities for older veterans

To develop support and activities for older veterans it is not necessary to be a veteran, or to work for an armed forces charity. Groups and services for older people generally can also do it, thereby improving their support offer to a significant proportion of current and potential members or clients.

Improving support for individual older veterans

By reading this guide you have taken a big step towards improving your support for older veterans. Additionally, you can:

1. Find out which older people you support have a connection with the Armed Forces

Asking “do you have a connection with the Armed Forces?” is preferable to asking “are you a veteran” as some veterans will not identify as such, and that question will also identify veterans’ spouses, widows and widowers. Men born between 1927 and 1942 are likely to have done National Service. Some veterans wear an Armed Forces veterans pin badge. Tattoos have long been popular in the Armed Forces and may be a sign that an older person has served.

2. Show interest in, and learn about, their Armed Forces experiences

Don’t hesitate to ask a veteran to tell you about their military service. Despite challenges and sometimes adversity, many will look back fondly on the experience, and showing an interest can enable to build a connection with them. In the Details and Resources section you can find suggested questions, and background information about the British Armed Forces you can use to encourage reminiscence.



When dealing with veterans, trust is important, being non-judgemental and being ready to hear some shocking experiences, maybe just to test the reaction of the recipient.”

Paul, veteran and Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Cub organiser

3. Don’t stereotype veterans

The stereotype of the ‘mad, bad, sad’ veteran is clearly damaging. However, being lionised as a ‘hero’ may also make veterans uncomfortable, including some who have experienced combat and demonstrated bravery. Respect for, and recognition of, their service is important. Yet frequently veterans will have led a rich and varied life after their time in the Armed Forces and will wish to talk about that as much, if not more.

4. Share information with them about their rights and support entitlements

Every veteran should be made aware of the Armed Forces Covenant. There are also advice guides for older veterans available from Age Scotland, which are available online at www.age.scot/veterans and can be ordered in print version from the **Age Scotland Helpline 0800 12 44 222**.

5. Book older veterans awareness training, and encourage other to do so

Age Scotland offers regular **Older Veterans Awareness Training**. This is an interactive half-day course to improve the ability of community groups and services to identify and support older veterans. To find out more visit www.age.scot/freetraining or call **0333 323 2400**.

Developing services and social opportunities for older veterans

If your group or organisation supports older people you could develop a dedicated service for older veterans, or a social opportunity for them within your programme of regular social events. Here are some tips for doing so:

1. Connect with the Armed Forces community locally

People and organisations that may be able to advise you in developing new services and social opportunities, and help you to promote them, include:

- **Age Scotland: 0333 323 2400 / veteransproject@agescotland.org.uk**
- The **Armed Forces and Veterans Champions** in your local Council or NHS Board: www.veterans-assist.org/veteran-support/veterans-champion
- Your local branch of the **Royal British Legion Scotland:** www.legionscotland.org.uk/branches-and-clubs
- Your local branch of **SSAFA – The Armed Forces Charity:** www.ssafa.org.uk/get-help/find-local-branch

2. Keep it informal

For some veterans, hierarchy is the part of Armed Forces life that they look back on least fondly. All you need for a veterans social group is a pleasant place to meet, some hospitality to offer, and – of course – veterans. Military paraphernalia isn’t required. It can be helpful to learn a bit about different ranks and services, but don’t feel you need to recreate their traditions – if veterans wish to do so they will take the initiative themselves.

3. Use social media, but not exclusively

Social media, and Facebook in particular, has been used effectively by Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast clubs to organise and promote their events. Of course, not every older veteran is online or using Facebook, so newspaper and community poster advertising is also important.

4. Banter and jargon

Irreverent humour is part of military life and the various branches of the Armed Forces joke about each other. Free flowing banter is part of what makes a veterans’ social group, so should be encouraged. Occasionally however banter may go too far and become offensive. It can therefore be helpful early in the formation of a new group to ask the veterans what they see as acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and from this develop a clear and simple code of conduct they can own.

Few if any professions use as many jargon and slang words, and abbreviations, as the Armed Forces, and veterans can enjoy brining these into their chat. Learning some of them can help you to tune into and join veterans’ conversations – see the Details and Resources section for a sample of military jargon.

5. Funding

There are funders that focus exclusively on veterans. These include:

- The **Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust**: <https://covenantfund.org.uk>
- **Scottish Veterans Fund**: www.gov.scot/policies/veterans-and-armed-forces/scottish-veterans-fund
- The **Unforgotten Forces** partnership offers a monthly email update that includes information about sources of funding for older veterans' services and activities: www.unforgottenforces.scot

6. Launch event

A launch event may be useful to attract publicity and uptake of your new service or social opportunity. Coinciding this with a commemorative date can make it newsworthy – in the Details and Resources section you will find a **British Armed Forces timeline**.

Another option is to time your launch with **Armed Forces Day**, which falls on the last Saturday in June. This is an annual celebration of the contribution of currently serving and ex-service men and women, with communities across the country encouraged to take part: www.armedforcesday.org.uk

Details and resources

Statistics and trends for the ex-service community in Scotland

Demographics

In 2017 there were an estimated **220,000 UK Armed Forces veterans in Scotland**, amounting to 9% of veterans in Great Britain and 5% of all household residents in Scotland (Scottish Government, Support for Our Veterans Strategy 2020)

In 2014 the **average age** of the adult ex-Service community in Scotland was 67 years, compared with 49 years for the general Scottish adult population (Poppyscotland – Household Survey 2014)

Veterans in the UK are estimated to be predominantly **white** (99%), **male** (89%) and/or **aged 65 and over** (60%) (MoD Statistical Bulletin January 2019)

Health and wellbeing

Four in ten Scottish veterans experienced six or more **adverse childhood experiences**, which suggests a challenging background (Poppyscotland – Household Survey 2014)

Reasons for early discharge: Musculoskeletal disorders 56% Royal Navy, 56% Army, 49% RAF: Mental and Behavioural disorders 21% Royal Navy, 29% Army, 33% RAF (Ministry of Defence 2019)

The overall rate of **PTSD** among currently serving and ex-service military personnel in Britain was 6% in 2014–16, compared with 4% for the civilian population (Kings College London 2018)

67% of men and 49% of women in UK military classify as having a **drink problem** compared to 38% of men and 16% of women in the general population (Fear et al 2007)

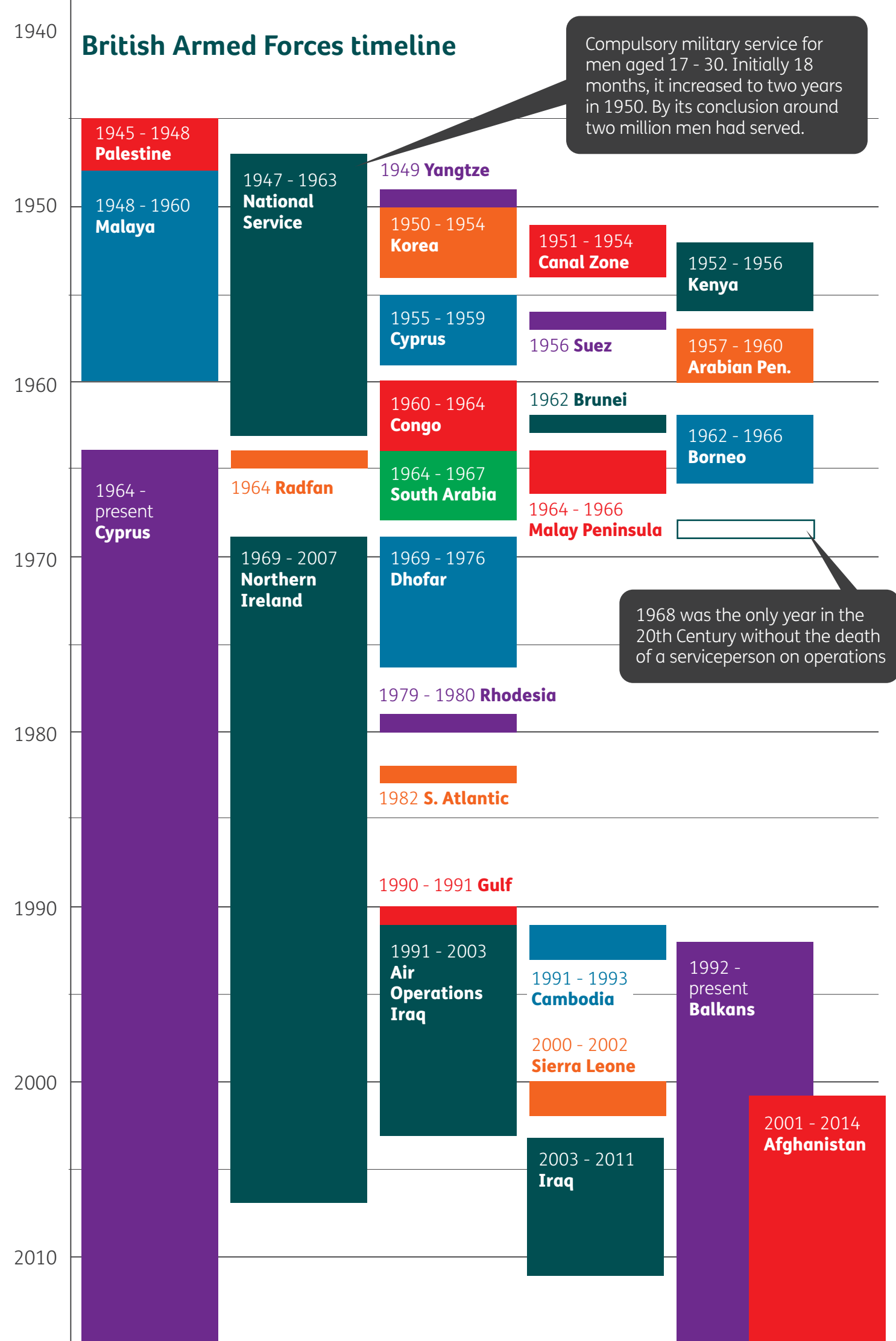
Only a **quarter** of UK military personnel diagnosed mental health problem **accessed medical help** (Iversen et al 2010)

Veterans wait on average 13 years after leaving the military before reaching out to **Combat Stress** for mental health and wellbeing support (Combat Stress)

Around 150 veterans in Scotland have **service-related multiple and complex injuries** (Veterans-health-wellbeing-distinctive-Scottish-approach, Scottish Veterans Commissioner 2018)

Veterans under age 75 are **three and a half times more likely to have hearing loss** than the general population (Lost voices report, Royal British Legion 2014)

66 percent of veterans age 65 or older have ever **smoked**, compared with 56% of older civilians (Ministry of Defence 2017)



Ideas for conversations with older veterans

Finding out about older veterans' service history can help you better understand the things that are important and of interest to them. This can help strengthen your relationship with them and generate ideas for activities to engage and enthuse them. If a veteran is reluctant to speak about their time in the Armed Forces never press it, as for some aspects of their military experience will still be deeply upsetting. Many veterans however look back with nostalgia on their time in service.

Here are some suggested conversations starters with older people who may be veterans:

- "Where did you originally come from, and what did you do after you left school?"
- "Did you ever serve in the Armed Forces?"

If they have served, you can ask follow-up questions:

- "Which Service did you join; can you remember your Service number?"

They almost always can, which opens the conversation.

Discuss service, deployments, memories, friendship groups.

Once you have established trust you could ask how their service influences their identity, interests, and friendships. This might influence the support you are able to offer.

Service life for some veterans will have been short, and very few will have been in the Armed Forces for their entire working life. Knowing that someone is a veteran doesn't mean you should ask them exclusively about their time in service.



Veterans on our Comradeship Circle calls will sometimes talk about their time in service, but mostly they will chat about everything and anything. So many have had amazing lives and experiences after their time in service."

Pam, Veterans Friendship Circles Facilitator Age Scotland

The British Armed Forces in outline

The British Armed Forces has three branches: The Royal Navy, the Army, and the Royal Air Force. Each is structured hierarchically.

The Royal Navy is the maritime fighting force. It includes the Surface Fleet of warships, the Submarine Service, the Fleet Air Arm (its aviation branch), the Royal Marines (an elite amphibious force) and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (providing logistical and operational support to military operations).

The Army is the land fighting force. It's larger units include a Brigade or Regiment of around 2,500 soldiers) and a Division of up to 40,000 soldiers. There are four types of Brigade: Air Assault, Armoured, Strike Brigades, and Infantry. There are also specialist brigades, for example artillery, engineering, communications and medical.

Some ex-service men and women may be proud of service with Special Forces, for example Special Boat Service (SBS Royal Navy) or Special Air Service (SAS Army).

Scotland’s Regiments

Many older Army veterans have served in regiments that no longer exist. Veterans can have a strong emotional attachment to their regiment, and some will have had family members who served in it before them. The loss of a regiment’s unique identity can feel raw. However, learning out about a veteran’s regiment, its history and traditions, can be helpful to stimulate positive reminiscence. Regimental associations, including those of historic regiments, can be a source of support for veterans in need.

Scotland’s current regiments are:

- Scots Guards: Mechanised Infantry
- Royal Scots Dragoon Guards: Armour
- Scottish and North Irish Yeomanry: Armour
- Royal Regiment of Scotland: Infantry

Formed in 2006 as part of a major army restructure, the Royal Regiment of Scotland has seven battalions, including some that are a legacy of historic regiments: The Black Watch, Royal Scots Borderers, The Royal Highland Fusiliers, The Highlanders.

Previous regiments include:

Name	Dates	Main recruitment areas
The Black Watch	1739-2006	Perthshire, Angus, Dundee
The Kings Own Scottish Borderers	1689-2006	South East Scotland
Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders	1881-2006	Argyll and Bute, Dumnbartonshire, Renfrewshire, Central Scotland
The Queen’s Own Highlanders (Seaforth and Cameron)	1961-1994	Highland, Orkney, Moray
The Royal Scots Fusiliers	1678-1959	South West Scotland
The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles)	1881-1968	Lanarkshire, Dumfries and Galloway
The Highland Light Infantry	1881-1951	Glasgow
Gordon Highlanders	1881-1994	North East Scotland
The Royal Scots Greys	1681-1971	
The Kings Own Scottish Borderers	1689-2006	South East Scotland

 Find out more at www.nam.ac.uk/series/regiments-corps

Medals and military awards

War Medal 1939–1945: Defence Medal, for homeland defence during World War 2.

Victoria Cross: For gallantry in the presence of the enemy.

George Cross: For acts of the greatest heroism or for most conspicuous courage in circumstance of extreme danger not in the presence of the enemy. Civilians may also be awarded the George Cross.

Distinguished Service Order: An operational gallantry award given for highly successful command and leadership during active operations.

Legion d’Honneur: Veterans of the Normandy landings in WW2 receive France’s highest honour.

 Find out more at www.gov.uk/guidance/medals-campaigns-descriptions-and-eligibility

Badges of rank

Commissioned officers hold positions of authority. They will have either started as a Junior Officer on completing training at a military officer’s academy, or have enlisted, risen through the ranks, and then applied or been selected for a commission. The Royal Marines are part of the Royal Navy, however, their rank structure mirrors that of the Army.

Royal Navy	Army and Royal Marines		Royal Air Force
Commissioned Ranks			
Admiral	General		Air Chief Marshall
Vice Admiral	Lieutenant General		Air Marshal
Rear Admiral	Major General		Air-Vice Marshal
Commodore	Brigadier		Air Commodore
Captain	Colonel		Group Captain
Commander	Lieutenant Colonel		Wing Commander
Lieutenant Commander	Major		Squadron Leader
Lieutenant	Captain		Flight Lieutenant
Sub-Lieutenant	Lieutenant		Flying Officer
Midshipman	Second Lieutenant		Pilot Officer
Non-commissioned ranks			
Warrant Officer 1	Warrant Officer Class 1		Warrant Officer
Warrant Officer 2	Warrant Officer Class 2		
Chief Petty Officer	Colour Sergeant		Flight Sergeant
Petty Officer	Sergeant		Sergeant
Leading Hand	Corporal		Corporal
	Lance Corporal		Senior Aircraftman
Able Rate	Marine	Private	Aircraftman

Who is recognised as a veteran in the United Kingdom

	Considered a veteran	Can apply for a veterans badge
Royal Navy (RN)	✓	✓
Royal Naval Reserve (RNR)	✓	✓
Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR)	✓	✓
Women’s Royal Naval Service (WRNS)	✓	✓
Royal Marines (RM)	✓	✓
Royal Marines Reserve (RMR)	✓	✓
Queen Alexandra’s Royal Naval Nursing Service (QARNNS)	✓	✓
Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA)	✓	✓
Royal Naval Auxiliary Service (RNXS)	✓	✓
Merchant Navy (MN)	✓	✓
Army (including Home Guard)	✓	✓
Territorial Army (TA)/Army Reserve	✓	✓
Women’s Royal Army Corps (WRAC)	✓	✓
Queen Alexandra’s Royal Army Nursing Core (QARNC)	✓	✓
Royal Air Force (RAF)	✓	✓
Royal Auxiliary Air Force (RAuxAF)/RAF Reserves	✓	✓
Princess Mary’s Royal Air Force Nursing Service (PMRAFNS)	✓	✓
Royal Observer Corps (ROC)	✓	✓
Bevin Boys (mining in lieu of national service)		✓
Women’s Land Army /Women’s Timber Corps		✓

 Application for veterans’ badge or medal can be made online at www.gov.uk/apply-medal-or-veterans-badge

Military jargon

AWOL	Absent without leave
Bimbling	To walk or do something slowly
Bootneck	A Royal Marine Commando
CinC	Commander in Chief
Compo	Composite ration
Crabs	Slang name for the RAF
CV	Combat vehicle
Fat Albert	Nickname for RAF Hercules plane
Gat	A gun usually a rifle
Hack it	To endure or to do something
Jacked	To give up
Jankers	To be on a charge in a camp jail
KFS	Knife, fork and spoon
NAAFI	Navy Army and Air Force Institutes - an organization running canteens and shops for British service personnel
Pongos	Slang name for army
Recce	Reconnaissance
Tab	Tactical Advance to Battle Army, a march in hills with full kit at fast pace Known as a Yomp in the Royal Marines
Whitecap or Snowdrop	Royal Air Force Policeman

 For more see: www.qaranc.co.uk/armyabbreviations.php



Useful organisations

The Not Forgotten Association

Through social activities and challenge holidays, The Not Forgotten Association combats isolation and loneliness amongst the Armed Forces community.

<https://thenotforgotten.org>

Unforgotten Forces

Unforgotten Forces is a partnership of leading charities working together to boost the health and wellbeing of all in Scotland age 65 and older who served one day or more with the British Armed Forces. It offers 'one-stop-shop' access to a wide range of practical and health-related support services, information and advice, and social and arts-based opportunities with others from the older ex-service community.

www.unforgottenforces.scot

Veterans Assist Scotland

Veterans Assist Scotland signpost and connect veterans and their families to organisations and services across Scotland. They have detailed online information on many topics including healthcare, money, housing and employment.

www.veterans-assist.org

Veterans Gateway

Advice on money, housing, health and more, by telephone and online. Contact details for organisations who provide a wide range of support and services to veterans. A Veterans Gateway mobile phone app is also available to download from Google Play and the Apple App Store.

0808 802 1212 / www.veteransgateway.org.uk

How you can help

Our vision is a Scotland where everyone can love later life.

All the information and advice we provide is free and completely impartial and in helping people access their rights and entitlements, it can be life changing.

We are an ageing population and more people than ever are coming to us for support. You can help us be there for those that need us most.



Make a donation

No matter how small or large, donations make a massive difference and help us continue our important work.

- Call **03330 15 14 60**
- Visit **age.scot/donate**
- Text **LATERLIFE** to **70085** to donate £5.*



Fundraise

Whether it is having a bake sale, running a marathon or knitting small hats for the Big Knit, there are so many ways to raise vital funds to support our work. To find out more, call **0333 323 2400** or visit **age.scot/fundraise**.



Leave us a gift in your Will

By choosing to leave us a gift in your Will, you can help Age Scotland to continue being there for vulnerable older people in the years to come. To find out more, call **0333 323 2400** or visit **age.scot/legacy**.

* Texts cost £5 plus one standard rate message

Let's keep in touch



Sign up to our newsletter

Our regular newsletters by email contain details of our campaigns, services and how you can support our work.

Sign up today by visiting **age.scot/roundup**



Follow us on social media

Our social media channels are a great way to keep up to date with our work and issues that affect older people.



[/agescotland](https://www.facebook.com/agescotland)



[@AgeScotland](https://twitter.com/AgeScotland)



[@age_scotland](https://www.instagram.com/age_scotland)



[/AgeScotland](https://www.linkedin.com/company/AgeScotland)

Contact the Veterans' Project

T: 0333 323 2400

E: veteransproject@agescotland.org.uk

Age Scotland Veterans' Project
Causewayside House
160 Causewayside
Edinburgh, EH9 1PR

 **@UFForces**

www.agescotland.org.uk/veterans

Project publications and individual contacts for the Veterans' Project team are available on the website.

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To refer an older veteran for information, advice or support from Age Scotland and its Unforgotten Forces partners:

T: 0800 12 44 222 (Age Scotland Helpline)

Age Scotland, part of the Age Network, is an independent charity dedicated to improving the later lives of everyone on the ageing journey, within a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in Scotland. Registration Number: 153343 Charity Number: SC010100
Registered Office: Causewayside House, 160 Causewayside, Edinburgh EH9 1PR.

The Age Scotland Veterans' Project is funded by the Scottish Government as part of the Unforgotten Forces partnership.

